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MEMOIR

OF

HON. HILAND HALL, LL.D.

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BY

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OF NORTH BENNINGTON, VT.

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MEMOIR OF HON. HILAND HALL, LL.D.

THE subject of this memoir, Hiland Hall, ex-Governor and ex-member of Congress, was born at Bennington, Vermont, July 20, 1795. His parents were of English descent. The emigrant ancestors of each, John Hall of the father Nathaniel Hall, and George Hubbard of the mother Abigail (Hubbard) Hall, after being over fifteen years at Boston and Hartford, became in 1650 the first settlers and large land-holders in Middletown, Connecticut, where in its ancient burying-ground may now be found tombstones of some of their early descendants.

His father was a quiet, industrious farmer, coming to reside in Bennington in 1779, and marrying at Norfolk, Ct., October 12, 1794, the mother, who ever proved a worthy and efficient help-meet. Both were exemplary members of the Baptist Church, of which he was a deacon, and were respected and esteemed members of society. The boyhood and youth of Hiland Hall were spent on his father's farm. He became interested in reading when quite young, and read all the books he could find or borrow in the vicinity, his taste naturally being for history or biography.

His early education was obtained in the common schools of his neighborhood, with the exception of nearly three months at an academy in Granville, N. Y.; which undoubtedly would have been rounded out to the full quarter but for sickness. The writer does not remember of hearing him speak of any other sickness in his youthful days, this being impressed upon him as taking largely from the sum total of his educational advantages, though he has told how his good mother, calling him to her side, when on speaking to the children of getting ready for meeting upon Sunday morning, and he making an excuse that he did not feel well, and claiming he ought to be permitted to stay at home, would reach for the "picra bottle," which was very generally kept in those days for worms, which was the usually considered trouble with children. He would generally

feel better and soon recover, without taking a dose, so as to make his scanty toilet, and go to hear the sermons of at least an hour or more in length, which were preached twice on the Sabbath.

Mr. Hall became interested in politics at an early age, favoring the republican in opposition to the federal party. During the war with England, early in September, 1813, a few weeks after he became eighteen years old, he was actively engaged in the formation of a young men's society in Bennington for a vigorous prosecution of the war, styled the "Sons of Liberty," and was one of a committee of three to prepare and report a constitution for the Society. The well-bound book of records of the Society is still preserved, the minutes of its proceedings covering over sixty pages of foolscap size. The Society held regular meetings, at which political questions were debated. Among its patriotic acts was the procuring from the ladies in the town and vicinity of 158 pairs of mittens and 42 pairs of socks, which in the name of the lady contributors were presented to the 11th Regiment of U. S. soldiers stationed at Plattsburg, N. Y., in January, 1814, which regiment had been largely recruited in Vermont. The Society continued in active life until after the close of the war, the last record of its proceedings being an account of its celebration of the Fourth of July, 1815, at which there were an address, procession, dinner and eighteen toasts, in accordance with the number of States of the Union at the time.

After the close of the war in 1815, there was a lull in party politics, and by 1820, the federal party, as a national organization, had ceased to exist, Mr. Monroe, the republican candidate, being elected president by a vote of all the states, the vote of only a single elector in New Hampshire being cast against him. At the elections in 1824 and 1828, Mr. Hall, in common with most of the New England republicans, voted for John Quincy Adams. The supporters of Gen. Jackson, who was elected in 1828, assuming the name of Democrats, their opponents took that of National Republicans, which was afterwards changed to Whigs, to which Mr. Hall belonged until it became merged in 1856 in the new republican party, a name under which he began his early political life.

He studied law and was admitted to the bar of Bennington County in December, 1819; established himself in practice in his native town, which he represented in the general assembly of the State in 1827. In 1828 he was clerk of the Supreme and County Court for Bennington County, and the year following was elected State Attorney for the County, and reëlected the three succeeding years.

Mr. Hall being naturally of a generous disposition, and easily turned aside when collecting his own bills, and thinking little of money for its own sake, but using it freely for the necessary comfort of his family, at this time increasing in numbers, as well as answering the claims of the needy and unfortunate; he early became involved in his pecuniary relations, and for years lived in a home

which was heavily mortgaged, but which he was enabled to clear up in middle life, having never settled a debt at less than one hundred cents on the dollar.

Another characteristic which tended to lessen his yearly income, was the conscientious expression of his opinion to his clients as to their just and legal claims when advised with as to the bringing of suits, or of continuing litigation after they had been commenced. A strict regard to right and justice often withheld the prosecution of suits, which in the hands of some would have brought returns in fees, adding much to the income of an attorney; but it gave confidence to those having right upon their side in employing him, as they never had reason to fear that he would be tampered with by opposite counsel, or their cases in any way be jeopardized by him for want of integrity. Thus the opinion obtained, to quite an extent, that the side upon which he was engaged would prevail, from the inherent justice it was undoubtedly possessed of. In after life he had the satisfaction of not being straitened in his pecuniary circumstances, though his magnanimous nature would have found ways to dispose of large possessions in the way of benevolence.

In January, 1833, he was chosen a representative in Congress to supply the vacancy occasioned by the death of Hon. Jonathan Hunt, and took his seat on the 21st of that month, during the extraordinary excitement growing out of Mr. Calhoun's South Carolina nullification ordinance, and witnessed the failure of that first serious effort at disunion. At the same election Mr. Hall was chosen a member of the 23d Congress, which commenced its first session the following December. The district then comprised the two counties of Bennington and Windham, with seven towns in Windsor County, viz., Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Springfield and Weston. This district he represented in Congress for ten successive years, receiving as a National Republican and Whig, five different elections by large majorities. His congressional service terminated the 3d of March, 1843, he having declined being longer a candidate.

In Congress Mr. Hall was a working rather than a talking member, though he occasionally made political speeches, among them one in 1834 against Gen. Jackson's removal of the government deposits from the United States Bank, and another in 1836 in favor of the distribution of the proceeds of the public lands among the states, which measure was in effect consummated at that session in the distribution of the surplus revenue, by which nearly seven hundred thousand dollars were received by the State of Vermont, and added to the school-funds of the several towns. Both these speeches were printed in pamphlets and extensively circulated by his congressional associates and others, and the former was reprinted in New York prior to the succeeding State election, and circulated as a campaign document.

But the speaking of Mr. Hall in Congress was in general of a

business character, made to influence the votes of members on pending questions, rather than for the country. His work on committees, first on that of the post-office and post-roads, and afterwards on that of revolutionary claims, was onerous and severe, his printed reports covering several volumes of public documents. In 1836, while a member of the post-office committee, he presented a report in opposition to the message of the President and the report of the Post-Master General, which had recommended the enactment of a law making it a penal offence to transmit by mail into any of the southern states, printed matter against the institution of slavery, termed "incendiary publications." The report, which was by a minority of the committee, was in answer to one that had been made to the Senate by Mr. Calhoun, and of which five thousand extra copies had been ordered by that body. Besides showing the great difficulty and danger of such legislation, the report of Mr. Hall took the ground that it would be an infringement of the liberty of the press, and a violation of the constitution, which had conferred no power on congress to look into publications and prescribe what opinions should and what should not be admitted into the mails, or be the subject of mail transmission. The report was signed by Mr. Hall and the Hon. George N. Briggs, afterwards governor of Massachusetts, but as the majority of the committee failed to make their report, that of the minority did not become a public document. It was, however, printed in the National Intelligencer at Washington, and in New York and other papers.

Mr. Hall's services were especially important in committees and also in debate, in opposing wasteful and extravagant expenditures. While on the post-office committee he took an active and prominent part in framing and procuring the passage of the act of July 2d, 1836, which made a radical change in the organization of the post-office department, and provided an effectual system for the settlement of its complicated accounts, by which an alarming series of frauds that had caused a very great drain on the treasury, was broken up, and an honest and economical administration of its affairs inaugurated and secured.

Mr. Hall's successful efforts in relation to one class of claims deserves a more particular notice, as well for the large amount involved in them as for the powerful influence and bitter opposition he was obliged to overcome in exposing their unfounded and fraudulent character. For several years there had been passing through congress, with little opposition, numerous claims founded on alleged promises of the legislature of Virginia, or of the Continental Congress, to Virginia officers of the revolutionary army, some of them denominated Commutation Claims, some Half-pay and some Bounty-land Claims, but all depending upon similar evidence to sustain them. In satisfaction of these claims there had already been drawn from the treasury over three millions of dollars, nearly all of which

had been paid for supposed services of deceased Virginia officers, and there were still pending before congress claims to the further amount of more than another million, and their number and amount were continually increasing. By a patient and laborious examination of the revolutionary archives in the department at Washington, with some information derived from the public records at Richmond, Mr. Hall became satisfied that the great mass of the claims already paid was wholly unfounded, and that those that were still pending were, if possible, still more worthless. In order to bring the subject fully before congress, he obtained the appointment of a select committee, of which he was made chairman. He prepared a report unfavorable to the claims, which was approved by the committee and presented to the House on the 27th of February, 1839, with the usual motion that it be laid on the table and printed. Contrary to the uniform practice in such cases, the printing of the report was vehemently opposed by the Virginia delegation. After obstructing the action of the House during the morning hour of that day, by dilatory motions and debate, they found the members impatient to order the printing under the previous question, upon which, as a last resort, Mr. Wise of Virginia called for the reading of the report, which by strict rule he had a right to require before voting upon it. The reading of the report was commenced, and was continued through the morning hours of February 28th and March 1st, within two days of the close of the session, when the pressure of other business prevented its being finished.

Mr. Wise's unexampled hostile call for the reading, therefore, had its designed effect of smothering the report for that congress. The next session of congress Mr. Hall became a member of the committee of Revolutionary Claims, and soon afterwards its chairman. On the 24th April, 1840, he made a report from that committee on the Bounty Land and Commutation Claims of the Virginians, similar to the one which had been suppressed at the close of the previous congress, which showed by authentic documentary evidence that every one of those allowances was unfounded. The efforts of the Virginians to obtain revolutionary allowances, especially for officers' bounties under an old law of their state, being still continued, Mr. Stanly, of North Carolina, on the 10th of June, 1842, offered a resolution directing the committee of Revolutionary Claims to examine and report on their validity, which resolution he afterwards modified by substituting a select committee for that on Revolutionary Claims. This was done on the complaint that Mr. Hall, the chairman of the standing committee, was unreasonably and unjustly prejudiced, and would not give the claimants a fair hearing. On the 16th of June Mr. Hall, having obtained the floor, spoke an hour in vindication of his course in regard to the claims, showing by undoubted documentary evidence that they were all, collectively and individually, either wholly fraudulent or clearly

unfounded on any revolutionary service to sustain them; and he closed his remarks by presenting a list of the names of sixty-four claimants, whose claims amounted in the whole to over two hundred thousand dollars, and comprised all of the latest of those claims that had been recommended for payment by the executive of Virginia, and were included in the bill then pending in the House.

He said every one of them was bad, and offered to abandon his opposition to the claims if any member would satisfy the House that any single claim was well founded. His remarks were commented upon by many of the Virginians, and among them Messrs. Goggin, Goode and Gilmer, in speeches of an hour each, which were all highly laudatory of the patriotism of Virginians and her revolutionary heroism, but none of them ventured any attempt to show the validity of a single claim. The speech of Mr. Gilmer in particular was of an aggressive and extremely personal character towards Mr. Hall, and was sharply replied to by him, in which his attacks were effectually repelled.

He not only made a further exposure of the claims, but showed that Mr. Gilmer, who had been governor of Virginia, had originated them by inducing the legislature of the state to recommend their payment by congress, when they were well known to be entirely worthless; that he had as agent of the Half-pay Claimants, whose claims were equally invalid, first presented them to congress, and that he was by a law of the state entitled to one per cent. on all that should be paid by the United States, on which he had already received over twelve thousand dollars, and was entitled to a like allowance on all future payments. This debate occupied the morning hours of several days, and having the numerous delegation of Virginia on one side and a single member from another state on the other, and being in a great degree of a personal character, attracted very general attention. The vindication of Mr. Hall, which was full and complete, and overwhelming to his assailants, was listened to with unusual interest, and was also the subject of general newspaper notice and comment. Ex-President Adams, who was a member of the House at the time, notices the debate in his Diary published by his son, as follows:

June 16th. 1842. Stanly moved the appointment of a select committee to investigate the expenditures on account of Virginia Military Bounty land warrants, from which sprang up a debate, and Hiland Hall opened a hideous sink of corruption until he was arrested by the expiration of the morning hour.

June 21st. Gilmer growled an hour against Hall for detecting and exposing a multitude of gross frauds, perpetrated in the claims relating to the Virginia land warrants.

June 22d. Goggin scolded an hour against Hiland Hall, and W. O. Goode took the floor to follow him.

June 24th. W. O. Goode followed the Virginia pack against Hall. James Cooper moved the previous question, but withdrew it at the request of Hall, to give him opportunity to reply to the Virginia vituperation.

June 25th. Hiland Hall took the morning hour to flay Gilmer and the Virginia Military land warrants.

This thorough exposure of these claims, and the marked rebuff and discomfiture of their champions, followed as it soon after was by a full history and condemnation of them in detail in a report by Mr. Stanly's select committee, operated as a final extinguisher of them. Mr. Hall was a member of the select committee, and the report had, by direction of the committee, been prepared and made to the House by him. Gov. Gilmer, the leading champion of the claims, was subsequently Secretary of the Navy under President Tyler, and lost his life, with several others, by the bursting of the Stockton cannon on board the Steamer Princeton in February, 1844.

By the act of congress, passed in 1832 on the application of the Virginia Assembly, under the lead of Gov. Gilmer, congress had assumed the payment of certain half-pay claims, which rested on alleged promises of that state to her officers, and had provided for their adjustment by the war department. These are the claims before mentioned, for the allowance of which by the United States Mr. Gilmer was entitled to receive a percentage. They were purely state claims, and there was no legal or equitable ground for making the United States liable for them. Those intended to be provided for had not only been allowed and paid, but the act had been so loosely and inconsistently construed by former Secretaries of War, that Mr. Hall, from his examination, felt able to show, beyond doubt, that allowances to the amount of several hundred thousand dollars had been made under color of its provisions, which the act in no wise warranted, and which were clearly unfounded and unjust. As other claims of like character were still pending in the department, Mr. Hall felt it his duty to call the attention of the then recently appointed secretary to the lax manner in which previous allowances had been made, and he accordingly addressed a letter to him on the subject, in which he respectfully suggested the propriety of his reconsidering the construction which should be given to the act. The secretary did not take the suggestion kindly, and rather a spicy correspondence ensued, the purport and spirit of which may be gathered from the two concluding letters, which were as follows:

Department of War, Feb'y 25th, 1842.

SIR:

In answer to your letter of the 24th, I transmit herewith a copy of your former letter of the 21st inst., as you request; and have to state that I could not perceive the object of it, if it were not to induce a suppression of operations in the class of cases to which you allude. I am extremely obliged to you for the information you gave, and will be still further obliged if you can point out a mode in which the erroneous construction you suppose to have been given can be corrected, without violating the indispensable rule of adhering to former decisions.

Very Respectfully your obd't Sv't,

Hon. Hiland Hall, J. C. SPENCER.
House of Representatives.

House of Representatives, Feb'y 26th, 1842.

SIR:

I thank you for the copy of my letter of the 21st inst., inclosed in yours of yesterday. In your letter you say you are extremely obliged to me for the information I gave you, and will be still further obliged if I can point out a mode in which the erroneous construction I suppose to have been given the act of July 5th, 1832, "can be corrected without violating the indispensable rule of adhering to former decisions." I would be glad to oblige you in this particular, but it is out of my power. Under an indispensable rule to adhere to erroneous decisions, I know of no mode in which they can be corrected.

You are doubtless unaware of the amount of labor this "indispensable rule of adhering to former decisions" will save in the adjustment of these half-pay claims. There will be no necessity of reading the law or the evidence in any case. You may safely allow, without examination, all claims that are presented. I will engage to furnish you a precedent from "former decisions" for any allowance you may make.

I am, Sir, very respectfully yours, HILAND HALL.

Hon. J. C. Spencer, Secretary of War.

For an account of the claims and the correspondence in full, see report No. 485, second session 27th Congress. It is believed there were few or no further allowances by the department.

Mr. Hall was Bank Commissioner of Vermont for four years from 1843, Judge of the Supreme Court for the like period until 1850, when he was appointed Second Comptroller of the United States Treasury, his duties being to revise and "finally adjust" all accounts with the government of officers and others in the War and Navy departments, after they had been stated and passed upon by the Second, Third and Fourth Auditors. A claim came before him founded on an expenditure that had been ordered by the head of a department which he thought was illegal, and the question arose whether he had authority to reject it. It was insisted in behalf of the claimant that the secretary being his superior officer and representing the President, the comptroller was bound by his approval, and had no power to disallow it. In support of this doctrine a labored written argument was presented, and it appeared to be sanctioned by the published opinion of three former Attorney-Generals. On full examination of the statutes, Mr. Hall came to the conclusion that judicial authority had been designedly conferred on the accounting officers as a check upon lavish expenditures in the departments, and it was as much their duty to disallow claims not sanctioned by law, as it was of a court of justice. The question being one of importance, the opinion of the comptroller was published in pamphlet, and it is understood has since been accepted and followed in the several departments, as a just exposition of the law on the subject, and recently a second edition of the same has been printed for the use of the Departments.

In 1851, at the solicitation of President Fillmore, he accepted the office of Land Commissioner for California, his associates being Gen. James Wilson of New Hampshire and Judge Harry I. Thornton of Alabama. The duties of the commission were to adjust the claims to land under the treaty of Mexico, the titles of the owners as recognized by the Mexican laws having been guaranteed to them by that treaty. Mr. Hall was chairman of the commission, and had charge of its funds, which he disbursed for its necessary expenditures, which amounted to several hundred thousand dollars; all of which was duly accounted for at the Treasury Department.

The contested land claims brought into full use the fitting qualifications which his habits of thought and investigation through life had developed. Among the cases brought before the Commission, many of which were of great importance, was the famous Mariposa claim of Gen. J. C. Fremont, involving millions of dollars, and in the adjustment and settlement of which the application of law involved, included almost without exception all points that would be liable to arise in the adjudication of similar claims. The opinion of the Commissioners was in this case written by Mr. Hall, and the points were so fully and clearly elucidated, that many eminent jurists have written him expressing their admiration of the document.

On the accession of President Pierce new commissioners were appointed, and Mr. Hall, at the solicitation of his son in law, T. W. Park of the firm of Halleck, Peachy, Billings & Park, then a prominent law firm in San Francisco, remained for a time with them as general adviser, and to assist in the preparation of briefs and other important law papers. In the spring of 1854, he returned to Vermont, and resuming his residence on the farm in Bennington on which he was born, retired from the further practice of his profession.

Mr. Hall was a member of the convention which met at Philadelphia in 1856 and gave the Republican Party a national character, by nominating candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency. In 1858 he was elected by that party governor of the state by a large majority, and reëlected the next year by a similar majority. In his first message, besides calling the attention of the legislature to the local affairs of the state, he spoke in decided condemnation of the then recent attempt of the majority of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, in furtherance of the wishes of President Buchanan and his advisers, to fasten upon the country, by judicial sanction, the new and extraordinary doctrine that the constitution itself legalized slavery in the territories, and that congress consequently had no power to prevent its introduction. The language of the message in regard to this assumed action of the court was as follows: "With a strong habitual reverence for judicial authority, when exercised within its appropriate sphere for the determination of individual rights, I confess I have not a high regard for it, when sought to be extended to political questions. The history of our

parent country furnishes many examples of judges, learned and eminent, whose extra-judicial opinions were sought and obtained by the government for the purpose of crushing out the rising spirit of liberty among the people. Indeed, for the character of the judicial ermine, it is to be lamented that judges, of distinguished legal attainments, have often been found giving countenance to oppression and wrong by ingenious and fanciful constructions, and that English liberty has been fixed upon its present firm foundations, not by the aid of judicial efforts, but by overcoming them. There is reason to hope that the extra-judicial opinions of the judges in the Dred Scott case, contrary as they are to the plain language of the constitution, to the facts of history and to the dictates of common humanity, will meet the fate which has attended those of the judges in the parent country, and that liberty will be eventually established in spite of them." In his last message in 1859, he thus announces his determination to retire from further public service: "In closing this my last annual message, I cannot withhold the expression of my grateful thanks to the freemen of the State for the confidence which they have on all occasions so generously manifested towards me; and I beg to assure them that in retiring from public life at the end of the present political year, I shall carry with me the warmest and most heartfelt wishes for the continued prosperity of the State, and for the welfare and happiness of its people."

He however consented to act as one of the commissioners to the fruitless "Peace Congress," which, on the call of Virginia, assembled at Washington in February, 1861, on the eve of the rebellion. He was chairman of the delegation from Vermont.

On the breaking out of the Rebellion in April, 1861, he felt it his duty to do all in his power to uphold the integrity and unity of the government, and his time, energies and means to a large extent were from the first devoted to aid in crushing it.

He at once favored the speedy forwarding of men, and assisted in the formation of companies, volunteering assistance to some families which would be left behind in needy circumstances, drawing the pay and taking care of money coming from or being sent to soldiers, and when bounties were paid, in the placing in the safest manner such money that it should best meet the wants of the enlisting party; all showing a deep interest in the preservation of the Union, the value of which in his estimation, no doubt, was increased by association for a long period in Congress by intimate relations with such statesmen as Webster, Clay, Adams, Giddings, Stevens and a host of others, when the doctrine of nullification or disunion was being advocated by Calhoun and his associates, that Slavery and State Rights might be sustained and perpetuated. His anxiety continued during the war, and not until the surrender at Appomattox Court House, did he feel that his or the vigilance of any other man should in the least relax.

One of his sons, Nathaniel B., was Major of the 14th Regiment of Volunteers, and was in the battle of Gettysburg. He sent substitutes for four other sons and himself when the need for men seemed imminent and the bounty had reached four hundred dollars each, besides the State pay and bounty.

Mr. Hall has always taken a deep interest in American history, especially that connected with the territory and state of Vermont. He delivered the first annual address that was made before the Vermont Historical Society; and for six years from 1859 was its president, and has since been active in the preparation and arrangement of the materials for the two published volumes of its collections, and in otherwise promoting its usefulness and success.

He read several historical papers at the meetings of the society, some of which have been published,—among them one in 1869 in vindication of Col. Ethan Allen as the hero of Ticonderoga, in refutation of an attempt made in the Galaxy Magazine to rob him of that honor. He has contributed historical papers to the New York Historical Magazine, to the Vermont Historical Gazetteer, to the Philadelphia Historical Record, and also to the New England Historical and Genealogical Register. In 1860 he read before the New York Historical Society a paper showing "why the early inhabitants of Vermont disclaimed the jurisdiction of New York and established a separate government."

In 1868 his Early History of Vermont, a work of over 500 pages, was published by J. Munsell, Albany. In it the controversy of its early inhabitants with New York, and their struggle for the establishment of their state independence, as well as their valuable services in the cause of their common country during the revolutionary war, are largely treated; and the necessity of their separation from the government of New York in order to maintain the title to their lands and preserve their liberty, is very fully and unanswerably shown.

Gov. Hall was very prominent in his exertions to have a suitable centennial celebration of the battle of Bennington, and in securing for it the favorable action of the State Legislature, and also in subsequently promoting its successful accomplishment. Accordingly, a few days of the week comprising the 16th of August, 1877, was set apart for this object, and devoted to the discussion and presentation of papers on subjects connected with the revolutionary period of the history of the state, in which the governors and other eminent men of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York participated, as well as President Hayes and a number of his cabinet. Thousands of the citizens, among them many military companies, with bands of martial and other music, from Vermont and adjoining states, and in fact from all parts of the union, participated in the services and made it a very remarkable occasion.

A few months before the celebration he prepared a clear and full

description of the battle, with an account of its important consequences, which was extensively published in newspapers and pamphlets, a copy of which has a place in the official account of the centennial celebration.

Mr. Hall was from the first deeply interested in the erection of a proper monument for the commemoration of the battle of Bennington. The later years of his life, and especially the last year, having reached the age of ninety, were given to efforts for directing and educating public opinion as to what kind of a structure would best mark that important event. A report was made in December, 1884, by a committee of the Bennington Battle Monument Association, on design, recommending "a structure to stand about twenty feet square on the ground, and about fifty feet in clear height, and to be on a mound ten feet high, making a total height of about sixty feet." This caused surprise and sorrow to Mr. Hall, and early in 1885 he published a short letter to the association and friends of the enterprise, giving his objections in a condensed form to the design recommended. In June following he addressed an open letter, printed in a pamphlet of twelve pages, to the members of the association, in which he set forth at length his views of monuments and their form, in relation to different historic events, and reviewed the design of the committee recommending the small, low structure, and advised, as his opinion, the erection of a tall, large, bold and commanding shaft, as a proper one to mark the victory. The following are his closing remarks in this letter:

"After a few more words by way of apology for the length and earnestness of this letter, I will bring it to a close. Born within less than twenty years after the battle, near the field where it was fought, and reared from childhood among those who were engaged in it, I early imbibed from their lips a taste for its study, and from such study acquired a conviction that it was an event of very great importance in the revolutionary history of our country. This conviction has lasted me through life, and has perhaps grown in strength with increasing years. I was early in favor of erecting a monument to the event; and, as president of the Bennington Historical Society, I took part in framing the bill for the incorporation of the Battle Monument Association, attended the session of the legislature at Montpelier in 1876, and gave such aid to our Bennington representative in procuring its passage as was in my power. For several years past the subject of the construction of the monument has been in the care of a Board of Directors in whom I had confidence, believing that they would agree upon a structure that I should approve. But I was so greatly disappointed by the report of their committee, which was published in December last, that I felt irresistibly impelled to oppose the adoption of their design by the Association; and this I felt obliged to do in spite of the knowledge that my opposition would bring me, in my greatly advanced age, into very undesirable conflict of opinion and action with some of my nearest and dearest and most valued friends. I have nevertheless thought it my duty to speak of it freely in this paper, which I have done, but without unkindness towards any one; and notwithstanding our antagonism on this subject, I

hope and trust they will still allow me to recognize them as my friends, as I shall certainly remain theirs."

The above letter was extensively circulated and read, and as a result of the strong presentation of the character of the monument required, at the annual meeting of the Association in August of the same year at Bennington, which was very largely attended and great interest manifested, and the whole matter fully discussed, the "report of the committee on design" was withdrawn, and the Association voted unanimously to erect a monument of magnitude and grandeur, as best befitting the event to be commemorated. A new impulse was thus given to the enterprise, and with the means already obtained, ere long the work will be completed.

The University of Vermont in 1859 conferred on him the honorary degree of LL.D. He was a life-member and vice-president for Vermont of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, a member of the Long Island Historical Society, an honorary member of the Buffalo and corresponding member of the New York Historical Societies.

He was married in 1818 to Dolly Tuttle Davis, of Rockingham, Vermont, who, after over sixty years of happy and useful married life, died January 8, 1879.

Their Golden Wedding was celebrated October 27, 1868. The cards, which were sent to none under fifty years of age, as it was made a reunion of old acquaintances, old friends and old-time neighbors, read in golden letters, under a beautiful monogram which surmounted a vignette in which was printed "Golden Wedding," with the dates 1818 and 1868 on either side, "Mr. and Mrs. Hiland Hall, at home Tuesday, Oct. 27th, from 2 to 5 P.M., North Bennington, Vt. *No presents received.*"

There were nearly three hundred present, among them a former teacher of his, aged 85 years, a schoolmate aged 77, two who were present at their wedding aged respectively 73 and 69. Of the gentlemen present who recorded their names and ages, one was 79, two 77, two 76, three 75, two 74, two 73, four 72, one 71, thirteen 65 to 70, fifteen 60 to 64. It appears his was the fourth generation to which successively had been permitted a golden wedding by a kind Providence. Mrs. Hall's parents, Henry Davis and Mary Tuttle, lived together 60 years lacking three days.—he was at the batttle of Bunker Hill under Col. Stark at the line of rail fence, from which the enemy were repeatedly repulsed with great loss, and also served at West Point at the time of Arnold's treasonable attempt to surrender it to the enemy, serving in the revolutionary war over three years, enlisting under the age of seventeen. Rev. Isaac Jennings was present, offering prayer and reading a part of the 31st chapter of Proverbs, from the 10th verse, "with personal reference to Mrs. Hall, the beautiful appropriateness of which was warmly

accorded by those present, an illustration of verses 19 and 20 being the fact that during the late war she knit scores of pairs of socks with yarn spun by herself, sending them with other things for the comfort of the soldiers at the front."

The sixtieth anniversary of their wedding came on Sunday the 27th October, 1878, their ages being respectively 83 and 86. It was observed by attendance upon divine service at the Congregational Church in North Bennington, of which she was a member. A very beautifully arranged basket of flowers was upon the table in front of the pulpit, the gift of very dear friends. At the close of the sermon allusions were made to the unusual length of time they had been permitted to live together, and fitting remarks were made tending to impress the sacredness of the marriage relation. It says in the Hall Genealogy, published in 1883, in speaking of Mrs. H., "Her early education, though somewhat limited, was such that she became a successful teacher. She was remarkable for strength of mind and character, and was possessed of uncommon personal beauty. In company she always drew attention for her queenly appearance and high social qualifications. She had a retentive memory, which was especially shown in her later years, by the repeating of much she had learned when quite young, and in many cases whole pages of prose or verse which had particularly impressed her. She enjoyed the confidence and esteem of her neighbors and friends, and richly deserved the approbation she received for her successful efforts in the management and raising of so large a family, mostly boys, her husband, during the formation period of their lives, being so much absent upon public official business. She never grew old in her feelings, but ever entered into the sports of her children with a zest which carried them with her, in the object for which she considered such pastimes should be indulged in, though a dignity was always maintained in the most familiar recreations, which tended to elevate. The wants of the needy received her kindly attention, and by her benevolence and uniform efforts she did much to enhance the comfort and happiness of others. For nearly fifty years she was an exemplary member of the Congregational Church in Bennington, and died confidently trusting in the Christian's hope."

At a family reunion in North Bennington, July 20th, 1885, in honor of Mr. Hall, at the residence of his granddaughter, Mrs. J. G. McCullough, and her husband Gen. McCullough, on which day he had reached the age of ninety years, there were present fifty-one of his descendants, there being five more who were detained from the pleasant gathering. The difference in the ages of the oldest and youngest was 89 years and 8 months. The Bennington Banner of July 23d, says of the occasion, "None seemed to enjoy themselves more than he whose birthday anniversary was thus celebrated. Although having reached this advanced age he still retains his bodily health and vigor, with all his mental faculties unimpaired. Con-

gratulations flowed in, in large numbers, in many instances accompanied by beautiful bouquets and floral offerings, a great portion coming from friends in Bennington Centre, where the recipient spent the larger part of his business and public life. These offerings seemed specially grateful to him, coming as they did from his old neighbors and their descendants. An elegant basket of fruit and flowers from a niece in Boston was specially admired. Tables were spread in the spacious dining room and hall, and all were seated and entertained with a banquet which did credit to the well-known hospitality of the host and hostess, the venerable Governor presiding at the board, and enlivening it with his humorous remarks. At each plate were cards, which must ever be valued mementoes of the occasion, whereon a skilful and loving hand, not unused to kindly and beautiful deeds, had sketched in water colors a faithful picture of the old Hall homestead and its annexes, still standing. Each card also exhibited a striking photographic likeness of the common ancestor. The repast being ended, the Governor addressed his assembled descendants with an interesting talk, which will ever be remembered by them, and which brought the sons and grandsons, by blood and marriage, one after another, to their feet, in a lively encounter of wit and fun. The evening closed with pleasant chat and social enjoyment, when the guests departed, each and every one feeling that it was good to be there, and wishing that the useful and honored life of their beloved ancestor might be long spared to them and to his many friends."

The fruit of the marriage was six sons and two daughters. Of the sons, four are now living, viz., Henry D. and John V., of Bennington; Nathaniel B., of Jackson, Michigan; and Charles, of Springfield, Massachusetts. The deceased were, Eliza D., wife of Adin Thayer, who died in 1843; Hiland H. in 1851; Laura V., wife of Trenor W. Park, in 1875; and M. Carter, in 1881.

Gov. Hall died in Springfield, Mass., at the house of his son Charles, with whom he was spending the winter, December 18, 1885. He retired in usual health on the night of the 17th, and was heard in the morning to open the register for more warmth, as was the custom, when a fall attracted the attention of the family, and on going to the room he was unable to rise, but gave directions for the caring of himself. He lived about two hours, the machinery of the body seemingly having worn out, he being in his ninety-first year. His remains were taken to Bennington and interred in the cemetery at Centre Bennington, where he had had, for years previously, a lot prepared, and where his beloved wife and most of his descendants have been buried.